

[ 24 cont. ]

they had never seen any. A certain dry humor spiced their conversation. I once said to a Bushman: "If you tell me this, you will get whatever you want." He answered: "Good, I shall speak and you will give me your automobile." Their imagination is very poor; in this respect they are much too accurate as observers of nature. Once a young Bushman woman with two children came to me and wanted to buy some sugar. I said to her: "I won't sell you anything, but you will get the sugar if you tell me some children's stories, for example, about animals." After some hesi-

[538] tation she began the story of Arri, the guinea hen. It was no fairy tale, but a detailed account concerning this important food bird. She even imitated the calls of the guinea hen, "for example, when someone comes and there is danger, then they say, 'gannana he gannana he,' but when they are alone and enjoying themselves, then they go 'gi gi gi.' " The children had to imitate this until they were able to mimic the sound accurately.

Then it was the turn of the sand hen, which says, "gi ganna gi ganna"; then the ostrich, which goes, "hmm, hmm, hmm"; then the gum bird [Harzvogel], which says, "hai-dschi, hai-dschi," and the owl, "mhm, m."

### 3. Posture, Movement, Stamina

516 As a result of his marked lordosis, the Bushman never assumes a posture that would conform to our military ideal; he almost always stands with his stomach somewhat protruding.

481 The way the Bushmen run is very peculiar and would justify detailed study. [ 25 ] The run is really a continuous fast walk, in which the legs are kicked forward, but the lower thighs are never brought back high, as is the case with our runners. The body is held as straight as possible, and the head up, not forward (1).

[113]

1. E. v. Eickstedt (Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit [ Ethnology and History of Mankind ], p. 556) states: "The foot is put in a peculiar transverse position, which makes the track in the sand easily

*The Fire*

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flames for a moment like a flame itself, then slipping down<sup>731</sup> behind the fire, made the rising smoke a great, soft, purple cloud. As the sky darkened, the flames around us seemed brighter and more yellow, and farther away we saw a thousand smaller fires burning, each in a tuft of grass or in a tree.

After we had eaten we sat watching our burning wall move away from us, listening to the cries of birds, day birds chased from their branches by the fire, night birds flying through the smoke to catch insects that were trying to escape. All the air stank with an oily odor given off by the burning trees—not at all the pleasant smell of burning wood, but a deathly odor, the smell of a forest being destroyed.

When we lay down in our blankets to sleep we found that even the ground was warm, and as soot and ashes drifted over us we lay awake and listened. Once during the night we heard something large run past us. A little later, farther away, we heard the sharp roar of a lion who must have tried to cross a patch of burned ground and had singed his soft paws. We heard his slow footsteps as he tested the earth carefully, then a grunt as he was scorched again. It made him cross, for he walked in a huge half-circle around us with a growl running steadily in his throat. I had thought that the Bush-<sup>[152]</sup>men were asleep, but they had also heard him and they<sup>522]</sup> laughed. Now and then, during the night, the burned trees crashed around us, and as our fiery wall moved slowly away, the rising smoke was gray in its yellow light, the stars were all obscured.

Before dawn in the morning the crescent of the new moon<sup>132</sup> rose, the tiniest sliver in the chilly air, followed by the salmon band of light, redder than usual because of the smoke. The wind must have blown a good deal of the fire back on itself because much of it was out, leaving a cloud of smoke hanging

609 same age, yet we learned later that it was so. We asked the boy to come into the jeep, which he did, watched by the others. We gave everyone a present of a large handful of tobacco, and drove over the burned grass, more crowded even than we had been before.

- 522 On the way home we saw and shot a springbok, as there was no meat left in camp. The bullet hit the springbok in the stomach and partly eviscerated him, causing him to jump and kick before he finally died. The Bushmen thought that this was terribly funny and they laughed, slapping their thighs and kicking their heels to imitate the springbok, showing no pity at all, but then they regard animals with great detachment. When the springbok died we tied him to the front of the jeep and drove on. The radiator boiled all the way, causing the body to decompose. Drops of blood and drops of moisture from the springbok blew back over us, mixed with the reek of decay and with a cloud of flies which we drove too slowly to escape, and which, spattered as we were, became very attracted to us. Only the Bushmen remained in good spirits, as they were pleased to see the meat and pleased with the amusement the springbok had given them.

522 On the way we saw an enormous hole in the earth, dug  
224 by an aardvark months ago. We stopped, and the Bushmen on their hands and knees crawled into it until all three were out of sight. After a while they backed out, one by one, reported that it was a very big hole indeed, and got back into the jeep. But before we could drive away Witabe jumped out again. He had noticed a mound of grass which looked like a haystack, it was so big, as high as a man's knees and as broad as it was tall. It was, said Gai, built by a mouse, a kind of nest, and at Witabe's request he got on top of it and jumped up and down to frighten out whatever lived inside. He was right: presently a mouse did come rushing out to vanish im-

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mediately down a hole. Gai continued treading in the half-<sup>522</sup> hearted hope of another mouse, with a disappointed, intent <sup>224</sup> expression on his face because the first had escaped him. Witabe, on the jeep, suddenly thought the whole performance so funny that he burst into laughter and laughed until he didn't make a sound, until tears ran out of his eyes and onto his belly, until he could hardly breathe, all to see Gai, the sole support of eleven people, the great hunter and provider, treading on top of a straw pile to chase away a mouse.

Gai was a little abashed and he stopped treading, but he did put his hand into the nest and pulled out the mouse's bed, a little ball of finer grass mixed with the mouse's own fur. Gai pulled it apart to show how it was made. We saw the mouse again when Witabe poked it out of the hole with a stick, but it ran back in at once, this time for good, so we went on, leaving the mouse with his home in a shambles and his soft bed gone.

We got back to camp late in the afternoon, and Tsetchwe<sup>854</sup> was so glad to see us that she threw her arms around me and held up her baby for me to kiss. She and I were the only young women for miles around, so there was a bond between us. She often gave me her baby to mind—not an easy job because Nhwakwe was as innocent as he was bold, and I had once taken him from under the wheels of a truck that was about to move. I had carried him to the werf for safety, but he hadn't stayed long; in a short time we had seen the grass moving at the edge of camp and Nhwakwe had appeared once more, this time dragging a toy, having walked the long distance all by himself and having navigated purely by a sense of direction, for the thick grass was high above his head.

Tsetchwe did not kiss her husband or even greet him, as <sup>576</sup> Bushmen are accustomed to short absences from each other <sup>593</sup> and it is not the custom for men and women to kiss. They

*Mood Songs*

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him off the ground. Wite did not resist, but swung limp and resigned, and when Gai released him he started to walk away. Gai had eaten all the meat except one morsel, and this he tossed to Wite, who picked it up from the ground and ate it apathetically.

Only the baby set a good example. I had picked him up and was carrying him when the three young boys of Ukwane's band noticed that he was mouthing something and holding something else in his hand. For a joke they extended their palms, telling him to share what he had in his hand, and he gave it readily. It was only the crackly skin that flakes off bones when they are roasted, quite flavorless, impossible to chew; Nhwakwe was only playing with it and the boys only pretended to take a bite, then threw it away. But either the baby didn't see them reject it or didn't care because in a moment he made them another present, the meat that he had been holding in his mouth. The young boys didn't see where he got it and they were about to eat it when Nhwakwe opened his mouth to smile and they noticed. They threw it down, but the baby spat some onto his finger and offered it to them anyway, and when they didn't take it he smeared it on their chests.

After the unhappy hour of eating, the people of Ukwane's band, their appetites dulled even though their bellies were not full, seemed more relaxed and the young boys went off to join the boys from the visiting band. The youngsters were always friends. The tensions suffered by all the members of both the bands did not affect their enjoyment of each other.

That evening the boys sat down near one of the fires and talk, and they told each other all the things that had happened since they last had met, perhaps a year before. Most of the incidents had happened fairly recently and most amounted to anecdotes about the other members of the

578 bands, who at the time were barely out of earshot. One story  
 522 concerned Dasina, how she had fainted from smoking too  
 152 much the day we had come, and to show exactly what had  
 happened, Wite and Witabe acted the scene, Wite taking the  
 part of Dasina and fainting on Witabe's shoulder while the  
 other boys laughed. Bushmen's jokes and stories are usually  
 funny at the expense of a person, an animal, or the god Pishi-  
 boro, maliciousness being one way in which Bushmen rid  
 themselves of their resentments.

536 Somewhat later Wite and Giamakwe acted for the others  
 831 the scene of the hyena's mating, as they imagined it or knew  
 825 it to be, for the night it had happened only the sound had  
 reached us and the hyenas had not been seen. Giamakwe  
 took the part of the male hyena, Wite took the part of the  
 female. First they walked together on all fours and rubbed  
 faces, and then Giamakwe climbed on Wite's back, emitting  
 a lonesome howl just like the howl we had heard. It was not  
 meant to be funny, and the other boys watched it calmly,  
 treating the mating of hyenas as a matter of course. All in  
 all, it was a majestic imitation, with snarls and growls, then  
 mounting and pretending to copulate with shivering and  
 ecstasy, then more growls, until finally the male fell away ex-  
 hausted and curled up on his side, whereupon the female at-  
 tacked him. It took a long time from start to finish, the Bush-  
 man boys being so literal that they not only gave a precise  
 rendition of the event but took exactly the amount of time  
 that the hyenas had taken.

574 The adults had not watched the children but were visiting  
 quietly with each other, some of the men from the Okwa  
 band having come to Ukwane's werf to sit at the fires. Very  
 late at night, when the Firewood Star was rising and the  
 Zebra Stars of Orion were just setting foot upon the earth,  
 the visitors got up to go.

555 men between their adolescence and their thirties in the entire area and not an excellent hunter, Crooked Kwi was sometimes a figure of ridicule. He was nicknamed Crooked because of the way he walked, the Bushmen said, although I could never see why, and now, tonight, the men began to taunt him. For a while Crooked Kwi just looked idly over his shoulder at the men and smiled.

“Why did your wife run away from you?” Lazy Kwi asked finally. This went too far; his wife really had run away from him once with another man, and Crooked Kwi had been grieved and humiliated. His wife had been persuaded to return to him, but the incident had not helped Crooked Kwi’s position as a figure of fun. Now, when he was reminded of it, he turned his head away. Bushmen can be quite cruel with their joking.

521 Perhaps to turn the conversation to other things Toma reminded me of a time I had driven him and some other Bushmen in a truck and had bounced them quite badly. He told me that the Bushmen had agreed that women should leave trucks alone. “Your husband would drive if you were married. Why aren’t you married?” he said.

I said it was because I was too young (I was twenty-three), intending this as a joke because Bushmen, even old grandfathers, always say they are too young when they are at a loss for an answer. “Oh no,” said Toma. “You are old enough now. Even the last time you were here you said you were going to be married. How is it that you are still alone?”

“Well,” I said, “I will someday.”

“Yes, that is what you told me last time and here you are again.” I couldn’t think of a thing to say, and Toma added: “Well, never mind. Your father will help you, just as I will help Norna here when she is a little older.”

At these words Norna lifted her head from her mother’s

484 women who are pregnant, or people who are ill. In fact, the  
 482 long journeys for the two kinds of nuts are undertaken only  
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 431 by strong adults, who therefore must gather for all those who  
 stay behind. The system of Bushmen in these matters en-  
 sures that everybody gets enough. As it turned out, that after-  
 noon we found that both Tu and Lazy Kwi had filled bags be-  
 longing to Lazy Kwi's wife, the bag that Lazy Kwi filled being  
 the only one he had with him, and in this way his wife, who  
 wasn't there and who so far knew nothing of her windfall,  
 owned two bags of food which she would probably share  
 with Lazy Kwi, who actually, that day, owned none.

At last, when many bags had changed hands, when every-  
 thing movable including Tu's bag of grass—which she had  
 emptied, tying the grass into a bundle with a strip of bark in  
 order to free the bag for tsi—had been loaded into the jeep,  
 484 the people began to climb in and the jeep sank down on its  
 springs, groaning dangerously as each person got on it and  
 found a place to sit. When finally everyone was on and the  
 springs still had not broken we drove away with extreme  
 caution, barely moving when we came to bumps, with Toma  
 and Gao Feet sitting on the hood and pointing the way to  
 Nama.

- 522 As we crept along Toma told a lion story concerning some  
 Bantu people at Kai Kai who tried to rid themselves of three  
 lions that were attacking their cattle. As his story was ex-  
 tremely funny, his voice was often drowned out by the laugh-  
 ter of the others. He spoke so fast we could not understand  
 him, but his wife laughed until she cried. Toma told the fun-  
 niest parts of the story two or three times.

271 Just before we got to Nama, when the shadows of the  
 bushes reached far over the veld and the western sky was  
 blood red, thick with smoke, we reached a tiny waterhole

12: Marshall E-5 (1951-1959) 1961 FX10 Bushmen FX10  
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unexpectedly long in making a return gift the people discuss this. One man was excused by his friends because his wife, they said, had got things into her hands and made him poor, so that he now had nothing suitable to give. Sometimes, on the other hand, people were blamed for being ungenerous ('far-hearted') or not very capable in managing their lives, and no one defended them for these defects or asked others to have patience with them.

As far as we know, only two general subjects are taboo in conversation. Men and women must not speak openly together of sexual matters except as they make jokes in the joking relationship. The /Kung avoid speaking the names of the gods aloud and do not converse about the gods for fear of attracting their attention and perhaps their displeasure. They told us their myths, but only when we asked them to. It is evidently not the habit of these Bushmen to recount the myths as they sit by their fires. They do not invent stories. They said they had no interest in hearing things that are not true and wonder why anybody has.

While a person speaks the listeners are in vibrant response, repeating the phrases and interposing a contrapuntal 'eh'. 'Yesterday', 'eh', 'at Deboragu', 'eh', 'I saw old /Gaishay'. 'You saw Old /Gaishay', 'eh, eh'. 'He said he had seen the great python under the bank.' 'EH!', 'The PYTHON!' 'He wants us', 'eh, eh, eh', 'to help him catch it'. The 'ehs' overlap and coincide with the phrase and the people so often all talk at once that one wonders how anyone knows what the speaker has said.

Bursts of laughter accompany the conversations. Sometimes the /Kung laugh mildly with what I would call a sense of humour about people and events, often they shriek and howl as though laughter were an outlet for tension. They laugh at mishaps that happen to other people, like the lions eating up someone else's meat, and shriek over particularly telling and insulting sexual sallies in the joking relationship. Individual singing of lyrical songs, accompanied by the //gumshi, or snatches of the medicine music, the playing of rhythmical games, the ceremonial dances themselves occupy the evenings, as well, but mostly the evening hours are spent in talk.

'A talk', as the /Kung call it, differs from a conversation or an arranged, purposeful discussion. It flares spontaneously, I believe from stress, when something is going on in which people are seriously concerned and in disagreement. I think that no formalities control it. Anyone who has something he wants to say joins in. People take sides and express opinions, accusing, denying, or defending persons involved. I witnessed one 'talk' only, in 1952, which I mentioned before<sup>1</sup> and should mention again in this context. It occurred over a gift-giving episode at the time of /Nai's betrothal and involved persons in Bands 1 and 2 who were settled near together at the time. Khuan//a, the mother of /Gunda, /Nai's fiancé, had diverted a gift which people thought was making its way to Gao Medicine, the present husband of /Nai's mother. Instead of giving it to him at the time when an exchange of gifts was in order, she gave it to one of her relatives. /Nai's mother's sister, /U, sitting at her own scherm, began 'the talk' by letting it be known what she thought of Khuan//a, in a voice loud enough to be heard in the two werfs, a startling contrast to the usual low flow of talk. Di/ai, /Nai's mother, sitting with her shoulder pressed against her sister's, joined in. People in the werfs went to sit at each other's scharms, forming little groups

<sup>1</sup> Lorna Marshall, 'Marriage Among /Kung Bushmen', *Africa*, vol. xxix, no. 4, Oct. 1959, pp. 332-3.

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It occurs in varying degrees of intensity. It is a repeating of something over and over and over again. For instance, whether it is actually so or not, someone may be reiterating that he has no food or that no one has given him food. The remarks are made in the presence of other individuals, but the other individuals do not respond in the manner of a discussion or conversation. In an extreme instance we saw a woman visitor go into a kind of semi-trance and say over and over for perhaps half an hour or so in  $\neq$ Toma's presence that he had not given her as much meat as was her due. It was not said like an accusation. It was said as though he were not there. I had the eerie feeling that I was present in someone else's dream.  $\neq$ Toma did not argue or oppose her. He continued doing whatever he was doing and let her go on.

All these ways of talking, I believe, aid the /Kung in maintaining their peaceful social relations by keeping everyone in touch with what others are thinking and feeling, releasing tensions, and keeping pressures from building up until they burst out in aggressive acts.

ASPECTS OF GOOD MANNERS

In /Kung society good manners require that, when /Kung meet other /Kung who are strangers, all the men should lay down their weapons and approach each other unarmed.  $\neq$ Toma, leader of Band 1, approached us unarmed the first time we met. After we were accepted and given Bushman names, we were no longer strangers and we never observed the practice again.

Good manners require that visitors be received courteously and asked to sit by the fire. The woman whose fire it is may welcome the visitor by taking a pinch of the sweet smelling *sa* powder, which she carries in a little tortoise shell hung from her neck, and sprinkling it on the visitor's head in a line from the top of the head to the forehead.

Good manners in eating express restraint. A person does not reveal eagerness or take more than a modest share. When a visitor comes to the fire of a family who are preparing food or eating, he should sit at a little distance, not to seem importunate, and wait to be asked to share. On several occasions we gave small gifts of corned beef to be shared with a group. The person who received the food from us would take only a mouthful. Once an old headman only licked his fingers. The lump of food would be passed from one to another. Each would take a modest bite. The last person often got the most. I found it moving to see so much restraint about taking food among people who are all thin and often hungry, for whom food is a source of constant anxiety. We observed no unmannerly behaviour, no cheating and no encroachment about food. Although informants said that quarrels had occasionally occurred in the past between members of a band over the time to go to gather veldkos, and although we observed expressions of dissatisfaction, no quarrels of any kind arose over food during our observations.

Good manners in general should be inoffensive. Any behaviour which is likely to stir up trouble is regarded with apprehension and disapproval by the /Kung. In view of this, the joking relationship has its interesting side. Men and women who have the joking relationship insult each other in a facetious way and also point out actual faults or remark on actual episodes which embarrass a person. Everyone joins in the

SHARING, TALKING, AND GIVING: RELIEF OF

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[322] uproarious, derisive laughter. All this is joking and one should not take offence. The /Kung say this teaches young persons to keep their tempers.

In contrast to the joking is their care in other aspects of conduct to avoid giving offence. #Toma said, for instance, that, if he were forming a hunting party and a man whom he did not want asked to join him, he would be careful to refuse indirectly by making some excuse and try not to offend the man.

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598 Gossip which can stir up trouble is discouraged. People do gossip but usually discreetly, in low voices, with near and trusted relatives and friends. It is best to mind one's own business, they say.

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626 People are expected to control their tempers and do so to a remarkable degree. If they are angry, aggrieved, or frustrated, they tend to mope rather than to become aggressive, expressing their feelings in low mutters to their close relatives and friends. #Toma told us that he had lost his temper twice when he was a young man and on one occasion had knocked his father down. On the other he had pushed his wife into hot ashes. It had so frightened him to realize that he could lose control of himself and behave in this violent way that, he said, he had not lost his temper since.

MEAT-SHARING

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598 The /Kung custom of sharing meat helps to keep stress and hostility over food at a low intensity. The practical value of using up the meat when it is fresh is obvious to all and the /Kung are fully aware of the enormous social value of the custom. The fear of hunger is mitigated; the person one shares with will share in turn when he gets meat and people are sustained by a web of mutual obligation. If there is hunger, it is commonly shared. There are no distinct haves and have-nots. One is not alone.

To have a concept of the potential stress and jealousy which meat-sharing mitigates in /Kung society one has only to imagine one family eating meat and others not when they are settled only five or ten feet apart in a firelit werf and there are no walls for privacy. The veld does not hide secret killing and eating because actions are printed in its sands for all to read. The idea of eating alone and not sharing is shocking to the /Kung. It makes them shriek with an uneasy laughter. Lions could do that, they say, not men.

224 The custom of meat-sharing applies only to the big game animals. Small animals the size of duikers or smaller, birds, tortoises, lizards, grasshoppers, snakes, and ostrich eggs are picked up incidentally and belong to the person who shoots, snares, finds or catches them. He may keep these for himself and his immediate family and may share them as he chooses, as if they were veldkos. #Toma says that, if there is only a little, he and his family eat a meal and give a little to anyone who happens to be near by at the time.

Meat-sharing applies to the big animals which are deliberately hunted by organized hunting parties. In the Nyae Nyae region they are kudu, gemsbok, wildebeest, hartebeest, springbok, warthogs and ostrich. Eland are found less commonly and buffalo rarely. The Nyae Nyae hunters managed to shoot giraffe occasionally. Giraffe are royal game by S.W.A. law, but the Nyae Nyae /Kung had not known this. When they were told, they called them 'Morrissi cows'. (Mr. Robert Morris was the Commissioner of Native Affairs at Runtu.)

The system by which meat is shared begins with the hunters, but the composition

776 In spite of their reluctance to say the gods' names in serious discussion, the /Kung  
782 say them in blasphemy. (The word for cursing or blasphemy is *za*. Cursing is also called 'mouth-medicine'.) The medicine men curse the gods when they are combating their evil intents in the curing ceremony. A light-hearted blasphemy also occurs among the /Kung, as among ourselves, and the names slip from men's mouths in an insouciant way, as though they did not really mean them, as we say 'God Almighty!' or 'Jesus Christ!' in our inconsequential swearing.

I wondered if we should find that certain names were more closely associated with certain phenomena, like lightning or rain, or with special functions, such as presiding over childbirth, but all my inquiries on this theme led me to the conclusion that the names do not have such associations. There appears to be, however, a vague tendency, though not a strict rule, to associate some names more with benefaction, others more with ill treatment of the people. *Gani ga*, which is a very respectful name, seemed to come to mind when they wanted to show that they were well disposed towards the god and wanted to thank him or ask him sweetly to help them. */Gara* and *≠Gaihi* *≠gai* we heard spoken in anger. They are 'scolding' names. One man used *Huuu* when he spoke of the greatness and power of the god, saying 'Huuu was the tallest of the Bushmen, a great man with many names', and *Hishi* was the name used when the creator said, 'I am *Hishi*. I am unknown.' *Xee* was not often uttered. The name *//Ganna* will be discussed later.

#### TWO IMAGES OF ≠GAO/NA

≠Gao/na, the Protagonist of the Old Tales

776 ≠Gao/na, we were told, was the oldest name of the great god. Through that name  
539 the /Kung identify the great god with an old ≠Gao/na, the protagonist of many ancient tales. Some sense of logical necessity, I believe, compelled the /Kung to merge the two concepts so that they say, when they are asked, that the ≠Gao/na of the tales and the great god are the same being, but this is a forced and superficial verbal resolution, for the two beings could hardly be more different. The people, I believe, really imagine them as different, and behave in quite a different manner as they speak of them. They tell the tales of the old ≠Gao/na's doings without restraint, [522] say his name aloud, howl and roll on the ground with laughter at his humiliations, whereas, when they speak of the great one in the east, they whisper and avoid his name. Yet they think that somehow in the rightness of things these two beings must be one, so one they are said to be.

The old ≠Gao/na was a kind of culture hero. He had supernatural powers. He could change himself into other forms and could change people into animals, bring people back to life, &c. He was a great magician, with powers over magic substances and objects. But, although he gave fire to mankind, he could not be called a great benefactor of mankind. He wanted fire for himself because he liked cooked food and [312] gave the fire to man rather as an afterthought. He was not very much concerned with man or with man's morals. He was not the death-giver, involved in the mysterious inevitable necessity of death, or a wrathful punisher, like Jehovah. Such vengeance as he took was not a mighty vengeance but only a getting back at those who tricked him. And usually his reason for killing someone was his own hunger. In those older [266] days, according to the tales, people were always eating one another or parts of one

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539 sandals.'  $\neq$  Gao/na came back and got his sandals and ran after the paouw again, but the paouw was gone by this time.  $\neq$  Gao/na cursed at his wives, 'You stupid lazy women, why were you so lazy that you lay down and didn't stir the pot?' The wives were much annoyed that  $\neq$  Gao/na had wanted to eat their brother.

Next day  $\neq$  Gao/na went hunting. While he was away his wives, because they were very annoyed, turned themselves into /qui twa veldkos [a veldkos which is like small cucumbers]. When  $\neq$  Gao/na came home he saw the pile of ripe /qui twa and ate them all. Then he came and sat by the fire. Soon he heard something laughing. He looked around but no one was there. He heard the laughing again and looked around. 'What is that?' he said, but he could see nothing. He heard the laughing again and again. 'Where is that laughing coming from?' he said. It was his wives inside him laughing at him and at this they kicked and kicked until they burst his stomach open and came out and were women again.  $\neq$  Gao/na was very surprised. How did he eat his wives? he wondered. /Naru, a dung beetle, then came to sew up  $\neq$  Gao/na's stomach. It was very sore.  $\neq$  Gao/na squirmed and struggled when /naru pricked him. Then came a little swa swa fly. He took over the sewing and sewed so gently that it was only like a tickling.  $\neq$  Gao/na was healed and soothed and he slept.

Next day  $\neq$  Gao/na went hunting again. He was annoyed with his wives for tricking him into eating them and for laughing in his stomach and bursting him open. Presently he came upon some fruit. He said, 'Oh, if only I had my sister or mother to gather veldkos for me!' He turned back and told his wives where the fruit was and went on the other way. The wives went to gather the fruit, but  $\neq$  Gao/na with his medicine had made the heavy fruit able to fly from the tree and hit the women so that they ran away crying. [The /Kung who were telling the story made the sounds which the fruits made bombarding the women, slapping themselves, crying like the wives, and rolling over with laughter.]

● [522] The wives returned to their werv. They were quite sad because their husband had treated them in this way and they discussed what they would do to get even with him. Next day they went out for veldkos again. They came to a place which they decided was right for their plan. They dug a big pit. Into it they opened their bowels and the pit was full of faeces. They then went to their werv and waited for  $\neq$  Gao/na. When he returned they said, 'If only we had a brother, he would go and kill the little eland we saw.'

$\neq$  Gao/na said, 'My wives, I shall go for you.'

They said, 'We know you are lazy, but our brother would go.'

But  $\neq$  Gao/na said, 'No, my wives, I shall go for you tomorrow.' So they slept. The next day the wives led him to the place where they said they had seen the little eland, where they had made the pit. They said, 'There it is, by that tree. You must go quietly.'

$\neq$  Gao/na brought an arrow out to shoot the eland, but the wives said, 'You lazy man, do not shoot it; catch it.' So  $\neq$  Gao/na got out his spear and the wives said, 'You will let all the blood run out. We like the blood to eat. That is what we meant when we said we wished we had our brother here to kill the little eland.'

So  $\neq$  Gao/na put his spear away. The wives said, 'Right there is where the little eland is; you must jump on it and catch it. We shall go on either side to help you.' And, when they were near, they said, 'Jump and fall on it and catch it.'

$\neq$  Gao/na got all set and made himself steady. Then he jumped and fell into the pit and the wives ran in every direction, laughing and saying how lazy he was. There he was in the pit. He could not stand up. He slithered around 'like a snake', the people said with graphic gestures and shrieks of laughter. He got up and fell down again, he got up again and fell again, swearing at his wives and cursing them. 'These wives are very cruel.' [The people imitated his voice, higher than a man's voice and mumbling.] When  $\neq$  Gao/na finally got

[195] out of the pit he went to a water-hole and washed himself and walked home in the evening thinking of what he would do to his wives to punish them.

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[54] know something which they did not know, they became defensive. /U said that her mother was lazy and did not tell her stories. That was why she knew so little. Old Xama said that her mother died when she was young, so she had remained ignorant.

[522] The story of ≠Gao/na's raping his son's pretty young wife is long and detailed and is recounted with humour and great enjoyment by the /Kung. ≠Gao/na tried to be away with the women alone while they were gathering veldkos. First he changed himself into a baby wildebeest, pretended that he was dead, and let the women pick him up. That plan did not work, so he made another. He disguised himself very cleverly as his own sister and went with the women to gather when they stayed overnight, and raped his son's wife, Te, in her sleep. In the morning when the women discovered who he was, he tried to persuade Te that it was not he but her husband, Kxōma, who had been there in the night, but Te knew it was not and was terribly upset. The women decided not to tell Kxōma or Khan//a, because they were afraid the sons would kill their father, so they all kept quiet when they returned and they lived in peace.

These stories have become very mixed up. In another version, the pit episode is used again. It is the sons' wives who dig the pit and entice ≠Gao/na to jump into it in revenge for ≠Gao/na's 'spoiling' Te. The substance in the pit is not faeces but ≠Gao/na's own semen. The women shape the semen into the form of a young giraffe. When ≠Gao/na finally gets out of this pit he cleans himself by rubbing himself on trees.

≠Gao/na and His Stupid Generosity

≠Gao/na sometimes prevails in his endeavours, but he has lapses and often appears to be far from clever. In one story he is both stupid and generous—too generous. This is a very long story in which Kxōma and Khan//a, his sons, kill an eland. Lions come and kill the sons. With the help of *zam zam*, the little tortoise, who was a person then and another brother of his wives, ≠Gao/na kills the lions by magic and restores his sons to life. The story ends in their all returning to the werf with the eland meat. They walk along. They meet a man. They give him gifts of meat. This man quickly hides his meat in a tree, then, dodging along behind some bushes, he runs ahead and meets ≠Gao/na and his party again. The sons and *zam zam* say, 'We have already given you some meat', but ≠Gao/na cannot remember and gives meat again. A third and a fourth time the man runs ahead and ≠Gao/na gives again, in this way. [Dam and /Qui were speechless with laughter acting this out.] For the fifth time the man runs ahead and ≠Gao/na does not remember him and gives him his last bundle of meat. ≠Gao/na would now have to return to his wives without any meat for them, but instead he hits his buttocks very hard. He hits them and hits them until he knocks his insides out. He cuts his insides into pieces, like meat, and takes them to his werf. Others have meat but he has none except his own insides. He cooks them for his wives. They say the meat is too tough to eat and ask, 'Why do the others have nice eland meat and you only this?' He says it is eland meat but that it has become dry. ≠Gao/na and his wives go hungry.

[522] A story about ≠Gao/na's getting fire was told in several versions. In one of them the name *Hawe* was used. That was the only time I heard the protagonist of the tales called by any name but ≠Gao/na.

≠Gao/na and the Fire Sticks

There was a time when no one had fire except one man whose name was /Kai /Kini. He had fire and the name of this fire was *doro*. [The word for fire is *da*.] *Doro* was made with fire